

Duddy To Move Down To 154, Fight Mora?

Written by Ron Borges
Saturday, 28 June 2008 19:00

BOSTON - What does a No. 2 ranked middleweight contender think about a half hour after winning his 25th straight fight? If you are John Duddy, you're thinking about losing some weight.

Duddy's new trainer, Pat Burns, has recommended to Duddy's promoters that the popular Irishman abandon the middleweight division and begin campaigning at 154 pounds. Burns confirmed that recommendation less than an hour after Duddy improved his record to 25-0 with a one-sided points victory over Charlie Howe at The Castle in Boston.

"I like him at 154 pounds," Burns said after Duddy had won every round on all three judges' scorecards from the durable but otherwise nondescript Howe.

"He made 158 with no problem for this fight. He would be a big junior middleweight. He's just an average (sized) 160 pounder.

"John has to buy into it but I've already told him it's better to be the big guy in a division than the small guy. He would be a small middleweight against someone like (middleweight champion Kelly) Pavlik but the big guy against someone like (IBF junior middleweight champion) Verno Phillips."

Irish Ropes, the New York-based promotional company that handles Duddy, has already been in discussions with Phillips' promoter, Art Pelullo, about a possible September title fight in either New York or Ireland. If the fight were to land in the latter location it would more than likely be in Dublin or Belfast, where Duddy is one of the most popular Irish fighters of recent vintage.

Of course, the same would be true if he fought in New York or Boston, where Irish Ropes has wisely regularly campaigned him to the growing acclaim of a feverish Irish population looking for a new champion.

Burns believes Duddy would have no problems scaling his body down to 154 and insisted he would be one of the strongest punchers in the division, as well as a physically imposing man as a junior middleweight. As a middleweight however, the barely 5-11 (read 5-10) Duddy would be giving away three to four inches and considerable punching power to someone like Pavlik.

"I don't think John had the greatest eating habits," said Burns, whose brother has been in charge of Duddy's diet and his strength and conditioning since taking over for Don Turner several months ago. Turner was replaced following Duddy's last bloody victory despite having trained him to four straight wins, including an impressive one against former title contender Howard Eastman at King's Hall in Belfast last December.

"For this fight he ate three or four times a day and drank all the liquids he wanted and came in at 158. He worked out three times a day with us. He ran hills and did interval training, boxed and at 6 p.m. he did strength training three times a week. It's the first time he ever worked with

Duddy To Move Down To 154, Fight Mora?

Written by Ron Borges
Saturday, 28 June 2008 19:00

weights. You could see the difference in his body.”

Duddy seemed noncommittal when asked about the possibility of moving down to 154 but others inside his camp insist both he and Irish Ropes have already bought into the idea, at least for now, and are hoping to land him a title shot with Phillips by early fall.

“It would take me a couple of months to know if I could do it,” Duddy (25-0, 17 KO) said after outpointing Howe. “I made 158 but it was not too pleasant. It’s been a long time since I made 154.

“My diet has improved a lot but I’d want to be cautious about it. I’d talk with Pat and everyone at Irish Ropes first.”

The sticking point may be more than the difficulty of making 154 at this stage of his career however. Duddy was one cut-free victory away from earning \$1.4 million to challenge Pavlik last month instead of Gary Lockett but he sustained two severe cuts in winning a disappointing, blood-spattered majority decision over Walid Smichet on Feb. 23, a week after Pavlik’s over-the-weight victory in his rematch with Jermain Taylor.

The Smichet fight was supposed to be a showcase for Duddy, lifting his stock enough to make a Pavlik fight saleable to HBO, but although he won, the severity of cuts over both eyes made it impossible for him to be ready in time. Now Arum is again talking about matching Pavlik with either Duddy or newly crowned junior middleweight champion Sergio Mora, of Contender fame, however, and the urgency of that increases with the talk of Duddy abandoning the division for thinner pastures.

Irish Ropes would love to see Duddy in a unification fight with Mora at 154 because Mora’s name recognition as the winner of the original Contender series reality show has made him a hot television commodity now that he has a title belt. If Duddy defeated Phillips the possibilities for him at 154 are many, while his chances of dethroning Pavlik seem minimal at best.

“John has a great fan base and if he won the 154-pound title his opportunities would be limitless,” Burns said. “He’d instantly become one of the most successful fighters (financially) in boxing.

“Imagine what a unification fight with Mora, who is very popular himself because of winning The Contenders, would do?”

Arum may very well try to cut off that possibility by revisiting his \$1.4 million offer to Duddy, knowing that if he doesn’t and Duddy moves to 154 he may lose both him and Mora as viable challengers for Pavlik.

In the end, money more than munchies will decide what weight John Duddy fights at. Certainly he and Irish Ropes could assume that if he wins the 154-pound title, or better yet unifies it, his asking price to move back to 160 to challenge Pavlik would grow considerably.

Duddy To Move Down To 154, Fight Mora?

Written by Ron Borges

Saturday, 28 June 2008 19:00

As of today, Duddy is the No. 2 rated middleweight contender in both the WBC and WBO ratings, is No. 6 in the WBA and No. 10 in the IBF. He is not rated by any organization at junior middleweight but if he chooses to move down that would not be a problem because of his present high standing at 160, one would assume.

As for Phillips, a fight with Duddy would very likely be his biggest and best financial option as well so, in the end, John Duddy's middleweight future will be decided the way everything else is in boxing - by what it's worth to him to knock off the dark ale and soda bread for a while.